



Eye Am (A Portrait of Emmett Till)
2021 ADMH Capitol Art Showcase

Drawing by J.P., a 28-year-old man, who has been at the Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility for one and half years and is working toward an imminent discharge. J.P. was the 2021 Best in Show of the Alabama Department of Mental Health Capitol Art Showcase.

"I have gained keen insight into the importance of a work/life balance since suffering a brief psychotic break, and subsequently being admitted to Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility. I use my creative talents to express how I feel and to get me through this journey of heartbreak and introspection. I draw inspiration from those who have been pillars of light to those in darkness."

-J.P.

J.P.'s story began with a misdemeanor crime, influenced by a mental illness which he was unaware of. He is a young man, who was at the time, possibly experiencing his 'first episode of psychosis.' With more awareness and intervention, J.P.'s mental health experience could have been much different.

First Episode of Psychosis (FEP) often begins when a person is in their late teens to mid-twenties and about 100,000 adolescents and young adults in the United States experience first episode psychosis each year. The Alabama Department of Mental Health has implemented programs to treat FEP and prevent chronic mental illness throughout an individual's life.

The FEP program provides treatment to youth and young adults experiencing symptoms of early psychosis. These programs utilize well-researched, and evidence-based practices to help youth and young adults recover, complete their educational goals, locate and maintain employment, all while teaching them how to strengthen their relationships with family and support networks within their community.

The FEP program provides a coordinated array of recovery-oriented services and supports to individuals and their families. The two-year FEP programs utilize a coordinated care approach which emphasizes shared decision-making with the client, as the focal point of intervention.

The department currently operates three sites that provide FEP program services in the state. NOVA-Birmingham operated by JBS Mental Health Authority, Jefferson County; NOVA-Mobile in AltaPointe, Mobile County, and NOVA-Huntsville in Wellstone, Madison County.

The NOVA FEP programs collaborate with other state agencies to include the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, as well as, the state IPS programs as a means of meeting the client's overall vocational and educational needs. Please contact April Watkins, Statewide Coordinator, april.watkins@mh.alabama.gov, 334-353-7414 for more information.

